

Exhibit 34

Home > Comic News

Comic Book Urban Legends Revealed Extra: Randy Schueller's Brush With Comic History

BY BRIAN CRONIN PUBLISHED MAY 16, 2007



In a recent Comic Book Urban Legends Revealed, I discussed the fact that a fan had come up with the idea for Spider-Man's black costume. The fan in question wrote in, and I thought it would be interesting to hear his story. Here, then, is Randy Schueller. - BC

There's been some discussion in the fan press recently about the original idea for Spidey's black costume coming from an anonymous fan. Well it's true and I am that fan. Here's my story...

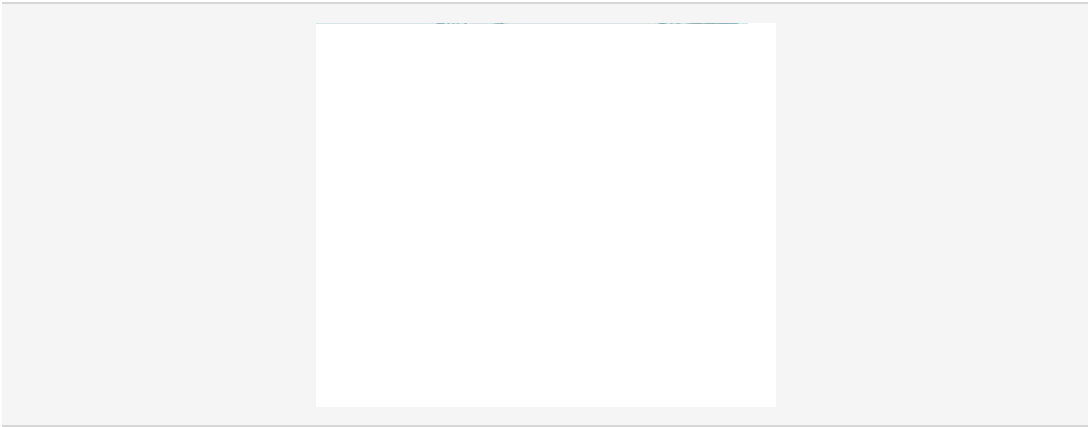
Back in the early 80s, Marvel ran a competition for aspiring writers and artists. Being a life long Spidey fan with delusions of comic grandeur, I took a stab at a story idea.



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I thought it would be cool if Spidey needed to upgrade his powers and his look, so I came up with this idea that Reed Richards had made a new costume for Spidey using the same unstable molecules that the FF costumes are made of. The unstable molecules would flow into Peter's pores and allow him to cling to walls better. I think my original idea was to increase his sticking power by 25% or something like that.

For some lame reason, I had the Wasp involved since she was the resident fashion plate of the Marvel universe at the time. Remember when Jan would show up in every other issue of the Avengers sporting a cool new costume? I loved when they did that! So to me it made sense to have her design the new spider suit when she was over at the Baxter Building for cocktails or something. Anyway, I saw the new suit as a stealth version of the original costume - jet black so he could blend in with the shadows. At best, all you could see of him was the blood red spider emblem, emblazoned on his chest. (Yeah, in my design the spider was red, not white. I also gave him underarm webbing like in the original Ditko design.)



Oh yeah, and I stole an idea from Iron Man and made his web shooters work using the same cybernetic technology that Tony Stark used to control his armor. Peter just had to mentally imagine the kind of web line he wanted to shoot and the suit would do it for him. (Keep in mind, this was 25 years before Civil War and "Iron Spidey"!)

A few months after submitting the story I received a letter from Jim Shooter saying he liked the idea and wanted to buy it for \$220. I was thrilled! But the best part - they offered me a chance to write the story. How cool is that?



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Click on the image to see a copy of the letter Randy received from Shooter almost 25 years ago, in August of 1982.

I ended up submitting a second version and even had a follow-up phone call or two with Tom DeFalco to discuss the script. Wow! Me on the phone with a real live Marvel editor. I still can't believe this happened!

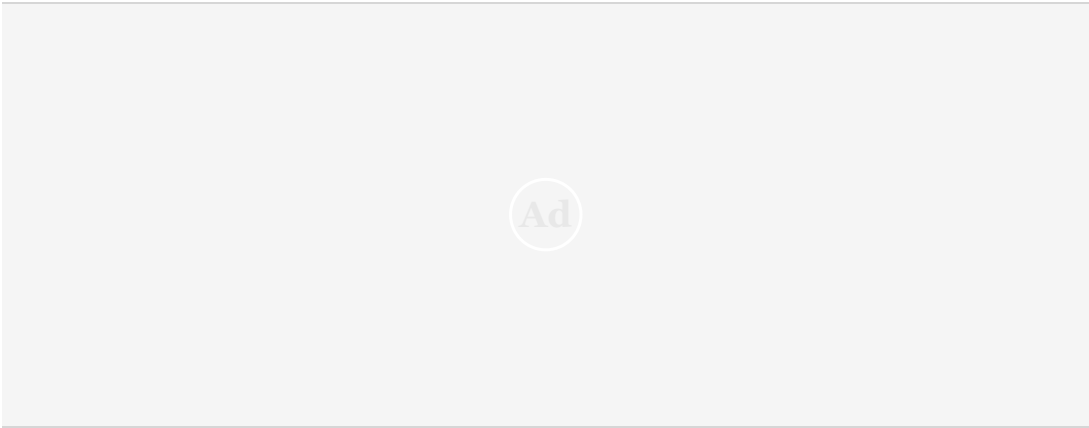
In the end, the whole scripting thing just didn't work out for me - I don't remember the exact reasons. I submitted another version of the story, they didn't like it, I stopped sending in letters. The whole thing just kind of fell apart. Regardless, I had no regrets. As a true blue Spidey fan, this was a very cool moment in my life.

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A year or so later, when Secret Wars came out and I saw my costume idea executed in a completely different way than I had envisioned it, I was simultaneously thrilled and saddened. And when the idea of the black costume caught on, I was even more thrilled. And then when VENOM was created I was...disturbed. I was never a fan of the costume-turned-villain idea. Give me the classic Ditko villains any day! Venom just never really seemed to work for me. But I digress...

Now, fast forward to 2007. I see that the black costume (MY black costume, sort of) is making its way to the big screen. Wow! I couldn't stand it anymore - I had to come out of the closet and tell my friends and coworkers about my contribution to this year's BIGGEST blockbuster. And I had all the documents to prove it even if Marvel never mentioned my name.

Since Marvel paid me for the story, I have no real gripe, but I do feel bad that they didn't give me any kind of acknowledgment in the comics. You know, something like, "costume concept by Randy Schueller" or "Thanks to Randy Schueller for inspiration," or "Randy Schueller, you Spidey fan-boy stud, you rock!" But no, I got nothin'! That's my one disappointment in this whole story.



I've written to Tom Defalco before, but I've gotten no response. Maybe Marvel is afraid I'll sue them or something, but that's not the case at all! I don't want any money, I don't want any legal rights to the Venom character. All I want is this: a mention in the letters column of Amazing Spider-Man recognizing me as the nameless fan who sparked the idea for the black suit which eventually led to the idea for Venom which eventually became the basis for this freakin' monster movie we call Spider-Man 3. That's all I want.

Thanks for letting me vent!

Randy Schueller

P.S. I thought the movie was great! (Except for the part about (spoiler alert!) the Sandman killing Uncle Ben. What was up with that???)



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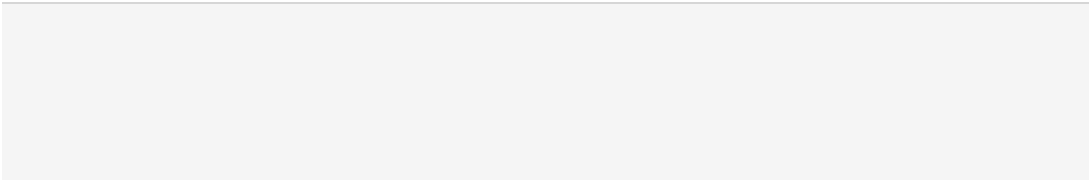
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CBR Senior Writer Brian Cronin has been writing professionally about comic books for over fifteen years now at CBR (primarily with his “Comics Should Be Good” series of columns, including Comic Book Legends Revealed). He has written two books...



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